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The Sun in the Poetry of Francis Thompson

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THE SUN IN THE POETRY OF FRANCIS THOMPSON

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VITA AUCTORIS

Walter Buchanan Dimond, son of Louis Paul Dimond and Katharine Buchanan, was born September 29, 1908, in Lima, Ohio. There he attended St. Rose Elementary School and St. Rose High School, from which he was graduated in 1926. After two years at St. Charles College, Catonsville, Maryland, he studied philosophy at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, Maryland, during the school year of 1928-29. In the summer of 1927 he had been sports editor of "The Lima Daily News," on which he was reporter from 1924 to 1926. Entering the Society of Jesus in January, 1930, he made his novitiate at Milford Novitiate, Milford, Ohio. He completed his undergraduate studies at Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, from 1930 to 1932 when he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts. His graduate work was done at Xavier the following year, at St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri, during 1933-34, and at West Baden College of Loyola University during 1934-35. He was an instructor at the University of Detroit High School in 1935-36.

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CHAPTER I

AIMS AND DEFINITIONS

Even the casual student of Francis Thompson's poetry can hardly fail to be impressed by his use of the sun as a symbol and an image. Further study only deepens the impression that the sun is the most important source of symbolism in his poetry. Two complete poems, "The Ode to the Setting Sun" and the "Orient Ode," each several hundred lines long, are devoted to the sun as a symbol of Christ and of God, while "To the Sinking Sun" presents the sun as an image of natural things. Besides these poems there are others, such as "Sister Songs," which contain frequent allusions to the sun. Moreover, scattered sun images are to be found throughout the poetry. It is the purpose of this thesis to investigate Thompson's use of the sun as symbol and image of other things, and of other things as images of the sun, to seek in his life and disposition the basis for this devotion to the sun, to point out sources from which he actually received inspiration, and others from which he may have derived help, and finally, to interpret the symbolism and imagery, whenever possible, in the light to be obtained from a study of his life and the inter-relation of these symbols and images.

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Before going further it is necessary to define just what is meant by the terms *symbol* and *image* as used in this thesis. A thesis such as this is not the place in which to make an exhaustive study of the meanings of these words. We shall, however, determine a generally accepted definition of each of them and use the words accordingly. *Symbol* and *image* have the same meaning in so far as they both signify that which stands for something else, with which it has a natural or conventional connection. Both are signs. Hence the two words are frequently used interchangeably. But the connotation attaching to the two terms is quite different. An *image* is usually something that may be apprehended by the senses; a *symbol*, something that may or may not be apprehended by them. For instance, a daisy may be an image of a star; the love of husband for wife may be a symbol of Christ's love for the Church. *Symbol* is frequently reserved for something superior, immaterial, or supernatural. It is not usual to apply *image* to what stands for God or the supernatural. In prose, at least, we would be more inclined to speak of a symbol of God than of an image of God. Ordinarily, at least in strictly theological parlance, the term *image of God*, is applied only to the soul, an immaterial substance. These different connotations result from the original meanings of the words. *Image* comes from the Latin, *imago* (likeness), and

ultimately from imitor (I copy). It is "an artificial imitation or representation of the external form of any object, especially of a person...."[1] A symbol is "something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else (not by exact resemblance, but by vague suggestion, or by accidental or conventional relation); especially a material object representing or taken to represent something immaterial or abstract, as a being, idea, quality or condition."[2] Symbol is derived from the Greek, συμβάλλω (I throw together). It should be noted here that this thesis does not restrict symbol to the narrow meaning it has in the Symbolist movement in art or literature. In this work symbol means a representation of something lofty, for instance, of God. Image means a sign of some other sensible or ordinary object, such as sleep or death.

Thompson's own attitude toward symbolism and imagery is interesting:

> "Ritual is poetry addressed to the eye," he wrote notes. The corollary of which supports his belief that poetry was an affair of ritual--or images.
>
> Imagination is the sense or science that discovers identities or correspondences, while fancy takes a lower place because, said Thompson, it discovers only likenesses. Imagination discerns similarity rooted or enskied; it is the origin of the symbolism that may be traced back to the heart of the truths and mysteries to which it supplies the outward shows. Imagination is the spring; Symbolism is here the manifestation of Imagination, is the identity-bearer, partaking of the very essence of the Divinity. The Symbols of Divinity are Divine; flesh is the Word made flesh; the Eucharist is the true Presence; and Christ is Himself the Way to Christ. Thompson's poetry and theology abode by the Image; it was

> no necessity of their nature to penetrate beyond the barriers of expression and revelation. The go-betweens of others were his essentials. Holding so grave an estimate of the functions of the imagination, he found in poetry the highest human scope and motive.[3]

There is no reason for surprise that Thompson gives a prominent place in his symbolism to the sun, for down through the centuries the sun looms large in the life of man. On it he depends for the light by which he sees, and the heat so necessary to his well-being. Not only his own health and growth, but also that of the plants and animals which contribute to his welfare, is due to the sun. In short, the sun is indispensable for man's very life. So closely associated is the sun with human life that some men have come to take it for granted and have failed to realize all they owe to it. Others have recognized their dependence on the sun, and mistaking it for God, have knelt down to it in worship. Such were the ancient Egyptians, whose cult of Re, the sun-god, is well known. Naturally,then, the poets of all times and of all countries have turned to the sun to use it in a hundred ways as symbol and image. Holy Scripture, itself, is full of references to the sun as a symbol of God and the supernatural.

To Thompson the sun is not merely a symbol, as it is to many other poets, but the symbol. Worship, Megroz tells us, is the key to Thompson's nature poetry.[4] Much more emphatic is the poet's own way of putting it: "To be the poet of the return to Nature is somewhat; but I would be

the poet of the return to God."[5] It is just as true to say that the sun is the key to Thompson's nature poetry, for it occupies the central position therein. To understand Thompson's attitude toward the sun is to understand his whole attitude toward nature and toward life. Sun symbolism and imagery "leap to the eye in half his poems."[6] As a symbol of God the sun is the unifying symbol in his poetic outlook on life.

> No common aim can triumph, till it is crystallized in an individual....Man himself must become incarnate in a man before his cause can triumph. Thus the universal Word became the individual Christ; that total God and total man being particularized in a single symbol, the cause of God and man might triumph. In Christ, therefore, centres and is solved that supreme problem of life--the marriage of the Unit with the Sum. In Him is perfectly shown forth the All for one and One for all...."[7]

These are Thompson's own words. And his biographer has aptly written, "Through the symbolism of the sun all things were brought into line."[8] Father Connolly, too, supports this view in writing on Thompson and the definiteness of Catholic mysticism:"Thompson's favorite symbol of this mystical view of life is, of course, the solar system."[9] In other words, to Thompson, as to every true Catholic, God is the explanation and the only explanation of man himself and of the universe. From God they come and for His glory they exist. God made man to know, love, and serve Him in this life, to use the other things in the universe as helps in so doing, and to enjoy eternal happiness with Him in the next life. Finding that the

sun best symbolized God, Thompson eagerly seized upon it, made it his own, and used it time and again in attaining what he held to be the end of poetry: "The world--the universe-- is a fallen world....That should be precisely the function of poetry--to see and restore the Divine idea of things, freed from the disfiguring accidents of their fall...."[10]

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Sir James A. H. Murray, Henry Bradley, W. A. Craigie, C. T. Onions, A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), V, p. 51, cf. image, 1.

2. Ibid., IX(1919), p. 362, cf. symbol, 2.

3. Everard Meynell, The Life of Francis Thompson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), pp. 215-16.

4. R. L. Megroz, Francis Thompson, The Poet of Earth in Heaven (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927), p. 138.

5. Everard Meynell, op. cit., p. 205.

6. R. L. Megroz, op. cit., p. 192.

7. Francis Thompson, The Works of Francis Thompson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), III, pp. 76-77.

8. Everard Meynell, op. cit., p. 211.

9. Rev. Terence L. Connolly, S. J., Ph. D., editor, Poems of Francis Thompson (New York: The Century Co., 1932), p. 428.

10. Everard Meynell, op. cit., p. 204.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND AND SOURCES

Thompson's fondness for the sun as a symbol, his ability to turn, twist, and bend this symbol with a wizardry that compels admiration, is largely the result of his own dependence on the sun for poetic inspiration and even for life worthy of the name. That he was thus dependent is attested by his own poetry and letters, and by his biographer and intimate friend, Everard Meynell. He had always been of delicate frame. Destitution and the drug habit, which he more or less conquered in later life, undermined his health. Consequently during the winter months he found that his vital forces and with them his poetic inspiration retired to the deepest recesses of his being, and that they were energized anew only by the quickening warmth of sunshine in the spring. England's damp climate served to make him still more dependent on the sun. In a letter written to Canon Carroll in 1890 Thompson himself describes the effect of bad weather on his powers:

> My writing powers have deserted me, and I have suffered failure after failure, till I have been too despondent to have any heart for writing to you. Much, no doubt, is due to this infernal weather. Confined to the house and deprived of sunlight, I droop like a moulting canary.[1]

Time after time in his poetry he sings his allegiance to the "Sun-god and song-god," for instance, in the Proem to "Sister

Songs":

Shrewd winds and shrill--were these the speech of May?
A ragged, slag-grey sky--invested so,
Mary's spoilt nursling! wert thou wont to go?
Or thou, Sun-god and song-god, say
Could singer pipe one tiniest linnet-lay,
While Song did turn away his face from song?
Or who could be
In spirit or in body hale for long,--
Old Aesculap's best Master!--lacking thee?[2]

Not merely on the sun, however, did he depend, but more so on Christ, of Whom the sun is a symbol, and on Him through Mary, symbolized by the moon, as he writes in the "Orient Ode":

My fingers thou hast taught to con
Thy flame-chorded psalterion,
Till I can translate into mortal wire--
Till I can translate passing well--
The heavenly harping harmony,
Melodious, sealed, inaudible,
Which makes the dulcet psalter of the world's desire.
Thou whisperest in the Mooh's white ear,
And she does whisper into mine,--
By night together, I and she--
With her virgin voice divine,
The things I cannot half so sweetly tell
As she can sweetly speak, I sweetly hear.[3]

Everard Meynell graphically describes the poet's misery in winter:

> On days when London is cracked and bleared with cold, and passengers on the black pavement are grey and purple and mean in their distress, whipped by the East Wind and chivied by the draughts of the gutters; when lamp-posts and telegraph poles and the harsh sides of the house ache together and shiver, Thompson would be the most forlorn and shrivelled figure in the open. It always seemed to be a necessity of his to be out in rough weather....Even within, beside a fire, he was a weathercock of a man. The distress of his hands, and the veering of his hair from the comparative orderliness of other times would instantly proclaim an East wind. It was written all over him, and

> though come to the shelter of four walls, the tails of his coat seemed still to be fluttering.... Sensitive beyond endurance, Francis yet made naught of his pains so long as the keener sensitiveness of his conscience was undisturbed. Of all men the least fit to endure physical suffering, he endured it forgetfully and even light-heartedly unless, his spiritual assent being thwarted, he felt the chills of estrangement from God.
>
> He was not more comfortable in the sun, and against the particular heat of 1906 he had particular ill-will. "Most people expatiate on the excellence of this summer, though the angry and malignant sun is as unlike the true summer sun as the heat of fever to the heat of youth."
>
> ....The early months, drenched with icy rain, had meant misery and dumbness. Breaking of silence came with the breaking of the frost, and the poetry which returned with the warm weather is full of acknowledgments....
>
> The Spring found him happiest.[4]

I. THOMPSON'S CATHOLIC FAITH

That Thompson used the sun as a symbol of religion is, of course, due to his Catholic faith, his training in his thoroughly-Catholic family, and his preparation for the priesthood at Ushaw. In his college years at Ushaw he gained a familiarity with the liturgy of Catholic services that is constantly reflected in his poetry.[5] There, too, it is very likely, he became familiar with the Scriptures and laid the foundation for the wide knowledge of them shown in his work. It is important here to insist on Thompson's Catholicity. Much of his poetry, such as "The Ode to the Setting Sun," "Orient Ode," and "The Mistress of Vision," can be adequately interpreted only by one fully conversant with the doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church. Lacking this knowledge and imbued with pantheistic or materialistic preconceptions,

a number of commentators have tried to make Thompson out a pantheist in reality, though superficially a Catholic. Among these writers is Vaughn,[6] who admits it is difficult for non-Catholics to understand Thompson because of Thompson's constant use of liturgical symbols, but still maintains that Thompson is pantheistic or pagan, at least in tendency. Weygandt[7] would have us believe that Thompson's spirituality is not that of any one church, but of all churches. Such opinions are completely refuted in Father Connolly's edition of Thompson's poems.[8] Even without this work, however, the biography alone is a trenchant refutation of the charge. Everard Meynell, an intimate friend of the poet, tells us of Thompson's deep Catholic faith, his insistence on the Catholic Church as an institution as well as on her doctrines, and his anxiety lest any of his poems be misinterpreted as contrary to her teachings. Many passages might be quoted, but the following will suffice:

> That "to the Poet life is full of visions, to the Mystic it is one vision" was the double rule of Francis Thompson's practice. Having regarded the visions and set them down, he would, in another capacity, call them in. The Vision enfolded them all. Thus, not long after it was written, he cancels even the "Orient Ode," and recants his "bright sciential idolatry" before it was half confessed. "The Anthem of Earth" and "The Ode to the Setting Sun" would also come under the censorship of his anxious orthodoxy, to be in part condemned. What profiteth it a man, he asks in effect, if he gain the whole sun but lose the true Orient--Christ? He came, even to the point of silence in certain moods, to feel the futility of all writings save such as were explicitly a confession of faith; and also of faithfulness to the institutional side of religion--the Church and the organized means of grace.[9]

A Catholic acquainted with the poetry is astounded when he first learns that anyone should doubt Thompson's Catholicity, but the surprise is lessened when he remembers that every heresy is merely one Catholic doctrine pushed to an extreme or misinterpreted to the neglect of some other doctrine. As Father Connolly remarks of one passage in the "Orient Ode," "The theological foundation of these lines is the immanence and omnipresence of God by which He is present in all things and yet not, as Pantheism teaches, identified with them."[10]

Fondness for the sun as a symbol was not acquired by Thompson in maturity, but was his from the first and seems to have deepened with the years and with his increase in scientific knowledge of light and of the sun's influence on human life. In an unpublished poem composed in his Ushaw days he writes:

> Think, my Soul, how we were happy with it in the days of yore,
> When upon the golden mountains we saw throned the mighty Sun,
> When the gracious Moon at night-time taught us deep and mystic lore,
> And the holy, wise old forests spoke to us and us alone.
>
> Yes, I loved them! And not least I loved to look on Ocean's face,
> When he lay in peace sublime and evening's shades were stealing on,
> When his child, the King of Light, from Heaven stooped to his embrace,
> And his locks were tangled with the golden tresses of the Sun.[11]

One of Thompson's two great poems on the sun was composed early in his brief poetic career. That career began in April, 1888, and the summer of 1889 saw the production at Storrington of "The Ode to the Setting Sun," the first convincing proof of his great powers. The "Orient Ode," his other great sun poem, was written at the latest during Eastertide of 1893. Of the other poems remarkable for sun symbolism and imagery "Sister Songs" was written in 1891, "The Song of the Hours," 1889-90, "Assumpta Maria," before December, 1893, and "The Mistress of Vision," sometime between 1892 and 1896.[12] Since Thompson wrote his greatest poetry before 1897 and after that year composed only a few poems, we can readily see that he made use of the sun as a symbol and image from the very beginning and continued to use it during the period of his greatest productivity. We find examples of this usage also in poems published during the last ten years of his life(1897-1907), "To the English Martyrs," "Peace," and "Cecil Rhodes."

II. USE OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

The scientific knowledge of the sun and of light acquired by the poet in his medical studies at Owens College, Manchester, during the years from 1887 to 1884 is made use of in his poetry. As Megroz writes: "The poet never loses his grip on scientific reality; he transcends it."[13] Thus in "Sister Songs" he brings in the sun's spectrum:

> The splendent sun no splendor can display
> Till on gross things he dash his broken ray,
> From cloud and tree and flower re-tossed in prismy
> spray.[14]

Again, he speaks of the dark lines on the sun's spectrum caused by metallic vapors in the atmosphere:

> The very loves that belt thee must prevent
> My love, I know, with their legitimacy;
> As the metallic vapors, that are swept
> Athwart the sun, in his light intercept
> The very hues
> Which their conflagrant elements effuse.[15]

Beautifully he symbolizes in the "Orient Ode" the force of gravity and counter forces by which the sun and its planets keep to their orbits:

> Thou as a lion roar'st, O Sun,
> Upon thy satellites' vexed heels;
> Before thy terrible hunt thy planets run;
> Each in his frighted orbit wheels,
> Each flies through inassuageable chase,
> Since the hunt o' the world begun,
> The puissant approaches of thy face,
> And yet thy radiant leash he feels.
> Since the hunt o' the world begun,
> Lashed with terror, leashed with longing,
> The mighty course is ever run;
> Pricked with terror, leashed with longing,
> Thy rein they love, and thy rebuke they shun.[16]

The influence of the sun in giving coal its energy finds expression in "The Ode to the Setting Sun":

> How came the entombed tree a light-bearer,
> Though sunk in lightless lair?
> .... Thou gavest him his light
> Though sepultured in night
> Beneath the dead bones of a perished world....[17]

Accordingly, Megroz can write:

> Thompson's two great odes to the sun afford clear evidence of his intellectual alertness to the scientific

> knowledge of his day, and in estimating his stature as a poet of Nature it is but fair to take this into account.... Profound imaginative expression of the connections between phenomena must always contain a core of meaning which the 'old noser, science,' will eventually prove by measurement. In the 'Orient Ode' the power of his imagination .... enables the poet more than to hint at the electronic theory of matter and the relativity of time and space.[18]

But Thompson was no hero-worshiper of scientists. He believed that the poet has a deeper and truer insight into the nature of things than the scientist and hence anticipates many discoveries of science. In a cancelled introduction to "New Poems" he wrote:

> "....And of the other poems(besides "The Mistress of Vision") some are as much science as mysticism! but it is the science of the Future, not the science of any scientist. And since the science of the Future is the science of the Past, the outlook on the universe of the "Orient Ode," for instance, is nearer the outlook of Ecclesiastes than of, say, Professor Norman Lockyer. The "Orient Ode," on its scientific side, must wait at least fifty years for understanding. For there was never yet poet, beyond a certain range of insight, who could not have told the scientists what they will be teaching a hundred years hence. Science is a Caliban, only fit to hew wood and draw water for Prospero...."[19]

And in a note to this passage Meynell quotes Thompson:

> "Many a bit of true seeing I have had to learn again, through science having sophisticated my eye, inward or outward. And many a bit I have preserved, to the avoidance of a world of trouble, by concerning myself no more than a child about the teachings of science. Especially is this the case in regard to light. I never lost the child's instinctive rightness of outlook upon light because I flung the scientific theories aside as so much baffling distortion of perspective. 'Here is cart for horse,' I rather felt than saw, and would nothing with them....Though scientists in camp together stand against me, I would not challenge the concensus of the poets."[20]

III. DEBT TO SCRIPTURE

Many factors combined to make the sun symbolism and imagery supreme in Thompson's poetry. As a boy and young man he was an avid reader of Shelley,[21] in whose verse the sun "is, with fire, supreme among material symbols."[22] But to Shelley, destitube as he was of religion, the sun did not symbolize God or Christ. It is in the Scriptures and in the liturgy of the Catholic Church that we find the sun and light repeatedly symbolizing God and the Word Made Flesh, Jesus Christ. The very title of one great sun poem, the "Orient Ode," echoes Holy Scripture, where Christ is called the Orient(from the Latin, Oriens, the Rising One). For instance, in the canticle sung by Zachary after the birth of St. John the Baptist we read: "And thou, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways: To give knowledge of salvation to his people, unto the remission of their sins: Through the bowels of the mercy of our God in which the Orient from on high hath visited us."[23] "Orient" is freely interpreted by Connolly as "one rising in the East like the sun."[24] Long before the days of Zachary, prophets of the Old Testament, Zacharias and Malachias, had used the sun as a symbol of the long-awaited Messias: "Hear, O Jesus thou high priest, thou and thy friends that dwell before thee, for they are por-

tending men: for behold I will bring my servant the Orient."[25] "But unto them that fear my name the Sun of justice shall arise."[26] In the liturgy, too, Christ is referred to as "the Orient," for instance, in the antiphons called "the great O's"(the antiphons chanted before and after the "Magnificat" in the Divine Office from December seventeenth to twenty-third). For December twenty-first the antiphon runs: "O Thou Orient, brightness of the everlasting Light, Sun of Righteousness, come to give light to them that sit in darkness."[27]

Thompson explicitly acknowledges the "Orient Ode's" debt to the liturgy of Holy Saturday for its inspiration,[28] though it is the inspiration of the great ideas underlying the whole poem rather than of the sun symbolism in detail. By that time the poet was already deeply imbued with sun symbolism and impressed with its possibilities, for he eagerly grasped apt symbols when he came upon them. About symbolism in general he wrote to Patmore: "It is enough that my gaze should be set in the necessary direction; the rest may be left to the to the practised fixity of my looking."[29] Again, he quotes at the beginning of "From the Night of Forebeing" a text from St. John that refers to Christ, "Et lux in tenebris erat, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt"(And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it).[30] "Assumpta Maria" is so close to its sources, the Office of the Assumption

and a hymn by St. Nerses the Armenian, that Thompson refers to himself as "poor Thief of Song."[31] Numerous other instances might be cited of sun symbolism in Holy Scripture and the liturgy and Thompson's use of it.[32]

It is possible that Thompson was influenced in his sun symbolism and imagery by the "Ode to the Sun," attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, which he mentions in his essay,"Sanctity and Song,"[33] by "The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius,"[34] so remarkably parallelled in "The Hound of Heaven,"[35] and by "The Divine Love and Wisdom," of Swedenborg, whose books he borrowed from Everard Meynell.[36]

It is impossible, however, to discover,at least in publications of the present time, whether Thompson had read these works before completing his great poems on the sun, likely though it be that he had read at least the canticle of St. Francis before writing the "Orient Ode." Early in 1892 he had gone to Pantasaph, where he discussed points of philosophy, theology, and mysticism with the Capuchins. The "Orient Ode" was written sometime after that visit. Two translations from Victor Hugo's "Feuilles d'Automne," "A Sunset" and "Heard on the Mountain," may also have played a part in turning Thompson's eyes toward the sun. These translations were made sometime Before 1892.

Incidentally, it may be added that Thompson made much of symbolism, devoted to it not a little attention and study,

carried on a correspondence with Coventry Patmore on the subject,[37] and even thought of writing a dissertation to show that symbolism is no arbitrary convention.[38]

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Everard Meynell, The Life of Francis Thompson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 125.

2. Rev. Terence L. Connolly, S. J., Ph. D., editor Poems of Francis Thompson (New York: The Century Co., 1932), p. 19, ll. 1-9. Cf. also p. 14, ll. 1-13.

3. Ibid., p. 166, ll. 112-24.

4. Everard Meynell, op. cit., pp. 272-73. For further confirmation cf. Rev. T. L. Connolly, S. J., op. cit.,p. 168, ll. 187-90; p. 61, l. 19ff.; p. 75, l. 1; p. 158, ll. 18-19; p. 176, ll. 197-295; p. 217, ll. 39-41. Francis Thompson, The Works of Francis Thompson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), III, p. 287, Prose Notes on Shelley.

5. Everard Meynell, op. cit., p. 31.

6. Herbert M. Vaughn, From Anne to Victoria (London, Methuen, 1931), pp. 229-53.

7. Cornelius Weygandt, Tuesdays at Ten (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), p. 202.

8. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit.,

9. Everard Meynell, op. cit., 201-2

10. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 459.

11. Quoted by Everard Meynell, op. cit., p. 29.

12. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., pp. 371, 314, 417, 476, 425, 519, 531, 533. For the "Orient Ode" cf. E. Meynell, op. cit., pp. 191-92.

13. R. L. Megroz, Francis Thompson, The Poet of Earth in Heaven (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927), p. 195.

14. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 39, ll. 334-36.

15. Ibid., p. 45, ll. 560-65.

16. Ibid., p. 165, ll. 59-71.

17. Ibid., p. 86, ll.111-12, 122-24.

18. R. L. Megroz, op. cit., p. 197.

19. E. Meynell, op. cit., pp. 237-38.

20. Loc. cit.

21. Ibid., p. 96.

22. R. L. Megroz, op. cit., p. 137.

23. The Holy Bible, translated from the Latin Vulgate (Philadelphia: John E. Potter and Company, no date given), St. Luke, I, 76-78.

24. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 449.

25. The Holy Bible, Zacharias, III, 8; cf. also VI, 12.

26. Ibid., Malachias, IV,12.

27.Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 450.

28. E. Meynell, op. cit., 192.

29. Ibid., p. 195.

30. P. Michel Hetzenauer, editor, Biblia Sacra (Ratisbonae: Sumptibus et Typis Friderici Pustet, 1929), S. Joannis, I, 5. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 460.

31. E. Meynell, op. cit., p. 173; Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 189, ll. 100; p. 476ff.

32. Holy Bible, Psalm 18, vv. 1-7, especially 6; Isaias, XLIX, 6; Ecclesiasticus, XLIII; St. John, III, 19-21;VIII, 12; St. Luke, II, 32. Dom F. Cabrol, O. S. B., The Roman Missal (Tours: A. Mame and Sons,Imprimatur 1921), Preface to the Mass for Christmas, pp. 451-52. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 371ff.; p. 449ff.; 453ff.; 477ff.; 506ff.

33. Francis Thompson, The Works of Francis Thompson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913),III, pp. 89-92.

34. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola translated from the original Spanish. 3rd ed., revised, no author given (London: Burns and Oates,1900), p. 76.

35. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 354.

36. E. Meynell, op. cit., pp. 206-07; Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 373.

37. E. Meynell, op. cit., pp. 191-97.

38. Ibid., p. 218.

CHAPTER III

THE SUN, A SYMBOL AND AN IMAGE OF NATURE

Although Thompson frequently uses the sun as a symbol or an image of nature and then a few lines further on as a symbol of religion, and although he intended that his symbolism should hold true when considered from different points of view, it is possible to select poems in which either nature or religion is predominant. In "Sister Songs," for example, the sun is almost exclusively a symbol or image of natural objects, or is represented by them. So packed is this poem, moreover, with sun symbolism and imagery that its message must be known, at least in brief, before these symbols and images can be fully understood and appreciated.

I. SISTER SONGS

Addressed to the two little Meynell children, Madeline and Monica, "Sister Songs"[1] opens with a complaint to the sun-god and song-god for failing to appear earlier in May. But at last the sun's "voice of light rings out exultant, strong." Spring, brought forth from the womb of the young Year, had to wait for the sun's hand to unfold it, since in the sun's eclipse the world knew naught of its birth. Then the poet prays Mary, "sweet stem to that rose, Christ," to help him

finish his work before the day of life or of poetic inspiration is dimmed by twilight, before the evening of death has struck and furled the tent of life, woven from calm and stormy skies, whence the lambent-footed sun, the soul, has gone forth. This Proem closes with an invitation to Spring's children to sing the praises of Sylvia(Madeline).

In Part One comes the response. The leaves and flowers are the first to answer, among them the daisy, dabbling its mouth in the milk of the sun's bosom, the snowdrop, from which sunny beams splash like drops of water, and the buttercup, filled to the brim with sun and soaking in the golden bath. Later on, the poet sees Sylvia standing amidst a crowd of children with her luxurious tresses floating in the light of the sun as he might see

> Far off a lily-cluster poised in sun
> Dispread its gracile curls of light.[2]

The kiss of this little girl had lifted him from despair after dawn dragged him from the wheels of night's car and left him to die. In return he begs Spring to keep her always fresh and pure. Spring replies that over the body she has no control, but that she will keep the soul pure and fresh forever,

> If Even burst yon globed yellow grape
> (Which is the sun to mortals' sealed sight)
> Against her stained mouth;
> Or if white-handed light
> Draw thee yet dripping from the quiet pools,
> Still lucencies and cools,
> Of sleep, which all night mirror constellate dreams...[3]

Such images of sunrise and sunset as these are to be found

frequently throughout Thompson's poetry.

In fact, at the very beginning of Part Two the sun in setting is represented by a flaming, burnished bowl, overflowing with a riot of blossoms, and that sunset, in turn, stands, as in the Proem, for the close of life or of poetic inspiration. Before either should come, he wishes to sing of Monica, unworthy though he is and though he seems

> Some sun-flower's spirit which by luckless chance
> Has mournfully its tenement mistook;
> When it were better in its right abode,
> Heartless and happy lackeying its god.[4]

To Thompson Monica is a presage of the unincarnated Beauty which he has ever sought. This spiritual Beauty is to the poet what Lady Poverty was to St. Francis of Assisi, except that St. Francis found and wed Lady Poverty while Thompson spent his life in searching for Beauty, the "unincarnated She." Connolly thinks it is of this lady that Thompson writes:

> It was my practice from the time I left college to pray for the lady whom I was destined to love--the unknown She. It is curious that even then I did not dream of praying for her whom I was destined to marry; and yet not curious; for I previsioned that with me it would be to love, not to be loved.[5]

Beauty dwells only in those portions of life's sea which are lighted by the sun's beams, that is, in the ordinary, everyday association and interchange between man and man, especially in family life where love and beauty reign. Such levels of life can be penetrated by the sun of love and beauty, but not the depths of ocean where Thompson, true to

the duties of a high poetic vocation and therefore isolated from mankind, dwells in the unfathomed cave of his body, his soul all athirst for spiritual Beauty. This poetic vocation demands great sacrifices. Consequently, he must always seek, but will never attain to "that bodiless paramour." Entangled in her hair, he goes on his way as ignorant where it leads as are the planets of theirs when they whirl like starry buds in the tresses of that Phoebean waissailer, the sun. In the never-ending war between his longings for human love and his call to higher things, the dawn of song breaks in the darkness of his soul and tinges with light even those desires so opposed to poetry:

> So,--in the inextinguishable wars
> Which roll song's Orient on the sullen night
> Whose ragged banners in their own despite
> Take on the tinges of the hated light,--
> So Sultan Phoebus has his Janizars.[6]

For the life necessary to heed the call of song and the inspiration to follow Beauty, Thompson owes much to Monica. In the darkest moment of his life she came, a pledge of dawn, as the first gleaming fissure of light breaks through the dull firmament like a golden crocodile heaving itself out of the Nile's slimy bed. Here we have an example of interlocking imagery. Monica is like the dawn; and the dawn itself is like a crocodile with golden scales rising from a muddy river. When the poet had been rescued from the London streets by Wilfrid Meynell, he feared that he had been saved only to die. But

when he saw this child standing between her father's knees, fear and pain left him, to be supplanted by love of her and the promise of better things to come, as he cried within his heart: "I take the omen of this face of dawn!"[7]

In later days she came to be a tangible proof, a vision of spiritual Beauty. His thoughts were full of her sweetness. And when his mind thirsted for beauty and sweetness, as an Arab in the desert thirsting for water turns his eyes towards "the roots of morning," the East, and sees a mirage, he turned his thoughts to Monica. And though a mere vision, the thought of Monica was a vision of a reality he had known, and moreover, an assurance that "beyond his ways" existed the "unincarnated She." So much Monica has been to him, Monica whose sex as yet is only in her soul. That soul has no parts and hence does not develop like the body, but is born with its full powers and yet must wait on the body's slow development for the use of those powers. It is a symbol of all power and its fulfilment. Thus the sun cannot display the brilliant colors of its spectrum until it dash its spray of light on gross matter. This law God Himself obeys:

> For supreme Spirit subject was to clay,
> And Law from its own servants learned a law,
> And Light besought a lamp unto its way,
> And Awe was reined in awe,
> At one small house of Nazareth;
> And Golgotha
> Saw Breath to breathlessness resign its breath,
> And Life do homage for its crown to death.[8]

Despite his knowledge of this law, however, the poet

frets at the soul's restraint when he hears Monica repeating the strains of her mother's poetry, as the column of Memnon is startled into music by the rays of the sun from Memnon's mother, Dawn. Monica's babbling of her mother's strains presages her own poetry

> ....even as the air is rumorous of fray
> Before the first shafts of the sun's onslaught
> From gloom's black harness splinter,
> And Summer move on Winter
> With the trumpet of the March, and the pennon of the May.[9]

But the poet must not aspire to heights beyond him, since Monica is a creature lighted by the sun of innocence and grace. She is "enshrined in a too primal innocence" for him who has sinned. The dew of life's dawn, sinlessness, is still moist in her hair, and the rays of the immaculate sun, which are the fringes of his cloak, brush her warm lips. Despite the poet's deep love for her he must be content because of his unworthiness, that the love of others with a better right should prohibit his love as metallic vapors in the atmosphere intercept their characteristic hues from the sun's light.

The Apollonian harp-player and wandering psalterist of the sky, the sun, enchants damsels of the sea into Naiads of the air. So does the poet's song, charming its daughters, send them to protect Monica through the course of life and keep her from sin. These daughters of his song give us an insight into Heaven's bliss even before we have experienced it, just as the air refracts the sun's rays and enables us to see the

sun before it has passed the horizon in the morning. He begs them to be with Monica throughout the day, at sunrise and sunset:

> With lucent feet imbrued,
> If young Day tread, a glorious vintager,
> The wine-press of the purple-foamed east;
> Or round the nodding sun, flush-faced and sunken,
> His wild Bacchantes drunken
> Reel, with rent woofs a-flaunt, their westering rout.[10]

At length, the poet's inspiration has passed. In the beginning he called that passing the setting of the sun. Now the sun is a censer at Benediction from which rise the incense fumes of evening:

> The day is lingered out:
> In slow wreaths folden
> Around yon censer, sphered, golden,
> Vague Vesper's fumes aspire....[11]

Finally, the singer inscribes his poem to Sylvia, who twines from the pleasant things of every day the golden cage in which he sings, and to Monica, the sun who gives their colors to all his flowers, his poems.

II. SUNSET

In "Sister Songs" there are examples of all of Thompson's principal tendencies in using the sun as a symbol and image of nature. For instance, his gorgeous description of sunset has already been noted. In his ode, "To the Sinking Sun,"[12] he dwells at greater length on the setting of the sun and its effect on his soul. The long slanting rays of sunset

make a hill appear covered with the snowy manna of daisies and fired to gold like a seraph's suit of armor. The sun, a huge bird, stretches its wings each evening and flies slowly through the heavens with a beauty ever old and yet ever new.

> Here every eve thou stretchest out
> Untarnishable wing,
> And marvellously bring'st about
> Newly an olden thing;
> Nor ever through like-ordered heaven
> Moves largely thy grave progressing.[13]

Though the same act, it is never done is exactly the same way as before. This kind of change wearies the poet, who cries:

> O Sun! I ask thee less or more,
> Change not at all, or utterly![14]

Change usually brings both sadness and wonder, but this variety causes only sadness in the poet's soul. In the sunset he sees symbolized his joys, his sorrows, and his dreams, experienced before and yet not entirely the same.

Throughout his other poems he frequently describes sunset in luxuriant imagery. The setting of the sun in summer and in autumn is contrasted in "The Sere of the Leaf."[15] In summer the sky is a gold-barred cage littered with deep-dyed clouds, the moulted plumage of the great bird, the sun, or a reef on which the sun, a treasure-ship laden with beauty, has been wrecked. In autumn, the sun, an Indian wrapped in his richly hued mantle, paces through the russet and amber clouds, leaves fallen from the tree of Heaven. Then when light fades, the sun goes down in a burst of red as if the swart boar,

night, had gored to death the day.

> Once the gold-barred cage of skies with the sunset's
> moulted dyes
> Was splendorously littered at the even;
> Beauty-fraught o'er shining sea, once the sun's argosy
> To rich wreck on the Western reefs was driven;
> Now the sun, in Indian pall,
> Treads the russet-amber fall
> From the ruined trees of Heaven.
> Too soon fails the light, and the swart boar, night,
> Gores to death the bleeding day.[16]

In other poems sunset symbolizes the heart of the world[17] and Shelley's death.[18] In it he sees a slaughtered sun whose blood the poppy drinks,[19] a dragon puffing red vapor into the West,[20] a butterfly alit on the swaying blossom of the sea,[21] "the beamy flood of sinking day,"[22] and "rosy waves" of sky.[23]

III. SUNRISE

Closely allied to the imagery and symbolism of sunset is that of sunrise, as has been seen in "Sister Songs." Thompson compares peace after the Boer War to the red glares of dawn after a stormy night,[24] when he writes "Peace." In "From the Night of Forebeing" he bids the folding doorways of the Eastern sky be opened wide for the rising of the spring sun with its quickening light. Sunset and sunrise are beacon fires kindled on the hills of West and East to welcome the traveller, Spring, back from her journeys around the world:

> Spring is come home with her world-wandering feet,
> And all things are made young with young desires;
> And all for her is light increased

In yellow stars and yellow daffodils,
And East to West, and West to East,
Fling answering welcome-fires,
By dawn and day-fall, on the jocund hills.[25]

As the sun at setting was called a dragon[26] and at rising a golden crocodile,[27] so in another poem daybreak is the hatching of a golden dragon in the East.[28] Again, the rising sun is the dayspring, which fills with light a cup for Nature's children.[29] In "A Corymbus for Autumn" the poet makes the rising sun a shepherd who washes the stars' gold fleece in the sea, while at sunset Day puts his lips to the sea and turns it to purple wine.[30]

These images of a cup and of a shepherd we also find in "The Song of the Hours,"[31] where the sun occupies a place important enough to warrant special treatment. Dancing before the palace of the Sun at dawn the Hours of Day and Night sing to a guest of Hyperion. The morning hours tell how they, the children of light, clasp at dawn their sisters, the hours of evening and night, and "lash from the way of the sun with the whip of the winds the thronging clouds."[32] The evening hours at sunset flutter round the lamp of day, the sun, with the soft moth, Evening. Through the folded wing of the morning hours filters the dawn's flaming light as they bow in reverence "when the sun makes golden earthquake in the East."[33] The evening hours are given the office of shaking over the sky fiery pollen from the sunset's ripened anther. Dawn means that the morning hours softly draw day's white pall over the dead

maiden, the moon. Like an acolyte with a censer, the sun swings round him with a hidden chain "the blossom-sweet earth," and the hours "follow the feet of the radiant shepherd, whose bright sheep(the clouds) drink of the sea."[34] From the sea the sun enchants walls of cloud to imprison "that drunken Titan, the Thunder." The winds leap upon the backs of those snowy steeds, clouds, "that are foaled of the white sea-horses and washed in the streams of the sun."[35] At dawn

> The bowed East lifteth the dripping sun,
> A golden cup, to the lips of Night,
> Over whose cheek in flushes run
> The heats of the liquid light.[36]

Or, the dawn is a burnished bridge which the morning hours throw over the sea for the passage of their king, the sun. To the morning hours, too, it belongs to dry the eyes of the flowers with slips of sunbeam and to put the sun's fire into the grape as they fly past.

IV. SUN-GOD AND SONG-GOD

From the foregoing examples it is easily seen that the various aspects of sunrise and sunset loom large in any discussion of the sun in Thompson's poetry. So, too, does the idea of "sun-god and song-god," which was discussed in a previous chapter,[37] and also at the beginning of "Sister Songs," in this chapter. "Daphne"[38] develops the same theme in a different way. In the old myth, Daphne, the river-god's daughter, was sought by Phoebus Apollo, "the sun-god and song-god."

At the moment he seized her, she was changed into a laurel tree. The story is made symbolic of a soul's call to the poetic vocation. The soul flees from Apollo, but is caught and changed into a poet, who must forego human love and matrimony to attain his end. The maiden in the myth stands for human love. Just as Apollo grasped for the girl, who was changed to laurel in his hands, so the poet grasps for human love which in his hands changes to poetry. "Is it worthwhile?" Thompson asks. He admits that the poet has an immortal name, but calls that only an empty honor, since the poet himself has gone to death along with ordinary human beings.

"Beneath a Photograph" opens with the words:

> Phoebus, who taught me art divine
> Here tried his hand where I did mine....[39]

The poem goes on to compare the photograph of Mrs. Meynell, produced by the action of the sun's rays on sensitive paper, with Thompson's portrait of her in verse. Addressing his little godchild, Francis Meynell, in another poem Thompson sings:

> To the Sun, stranger, surely you belong,
> Giver of golden days and golden song;
> Nor is it by an all-unhappy plan
> You bear the name of me, his constant Magian.[40]

"Contemplation" portrays another mood of the poet's, for there

> The sun with resting pulses seems to brood,
> And slacken its command upon my unurged blood.[41]

The "Phoebean wassailer" of "Sister Songs" becomes the toper of "A Corymbus for Autumn" in the lines:

The sopped sun--toper as ever drank hard--
Stares foolish, hazed,
Rubicund, dazed,
Totty with thine October tankard.[42]

"Nocturn" speaks of the sun as the mate of the moon.[43] And in other poems one may read of "sunshine sight,"[44] the "all-kissing sun,"[45]"the sun's hand,"[46] "the sun's blood,"[47] "the sun's life,"[48] "the sun at sullen gaze,"[49] and "the sun and wind's joined flood."[50] Again, the clouds are "washed in the lambent waters of the sun.[51] Tribute is levied on the golden sun.[52]

So much for the sun as a symbol and image of natural objects. Since some critics have accused Thompson of paganism in certain poems, his warning in the essay on Shelley has place here: "Eye her(poetry) not askance if she seldom sing directly of religion; the bird gives glory to God though it sings only of its innocent loves."[53] In singing of the gorgeousness of sunrise and sunset Thompson is carolling the glory of God manifested in His creatures. The sun is used more frequently as a symbol of poetry and poetic inspiration than of anything else. Sunrise and spring represent the welling up of inspiration in the soul; sunset and autumn, its passing. Inspiration is dependent on natural love, beauty, and goodness as they come within the poet's ken. And natural love, beauty, and goodness have their source elsewhere than in themselves or in the other things of the world in which we live. When a man sees a beautiful sunset, for instance, he must, if he would explain it fully, go

back not merely to its proximate causes, the refraction of the sun's rays and so on, but to its ultimate cause, which must contain within itself a beauty at least equal to the beauty produced. For "No one can give what he does not possess," or in other words, "No person or thing can cause what he or it has not the power of causing." All natural beauty, goodness, and love have God as their ultimate cause. So Thompson goes further than the proximate causes and makes the sun a symbol of the supernatural, that is, of God, the ultimate source of natural love, beauty, and goodness.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Rev. Terence L. Connolly, S. J., Ph. D., editor, Poems of Francis Thompson (New York: The Century Co., 1932), pp. 19-52.

2. Ibid., p. 27, ll. 236-37.

3. Ibid., p. 30, ll. 353-59.

4. Ibid., p. 31, ll. 15-18.

5. Everard Meynell, The Life of Francis Thompson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 73.

6. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 34, ll. 139-43.

7. Ibid., p. 35, l.200.

8. Ibid., p. 39, ll. 348-55.

9. Ibid., p. 41, ll. 411-15.

10. Ibid., p. 49, ll. 730-35.

11. Ibid., p. 49, ll. 739-42.

12. Ibid., pp. 273-74.

13. Ibid., p. 273, ll. 7-12.

14. Ibid., p. 273, ll. 23-24.

15. Ibid., pp.126-29.

16. Ibid., p. 126, ll. 27-35.

17. Ibid., p. 75,ll. 19, 91.

18. Ibid., p. 281, ll. 31-32.

19. Ibid., p. 7, ll. 5-6.

20. Ibid., p. 98, ll. 68-69.

21. Ibid., p. 98, ll. 70-78.

22. Ibid., p. 26, ll. 230-32.

23. Ibid., p. 46, ll. 614-15.

24. Ibid., p. 250, ll. 1-15; cf. also p. 217, l. 40.

25. Ibid., p. 171, ll. 15-21; cf. also ll. 1-2.

26. Cf. supra p. 22, note 20.

27. Cf. supra p. 19; also Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 34, ll. 159-62.

28. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 127, ll. 47-48.

29. Ibid., p. 79, ll. 71-72.

30. Ibid., p. 100, ll. 138-43.

31. Ibid., pp. 133-38.

32. Ibid., p. 133, ll. 9-10.

33. Ibid., p. 135, ll. 35-36.

34. Ibid., p. 136, ll. 69-72.

35. Ibid., p. 137, ll. 111-12.

36. Ibid., p. 138, ll. 143-46.

37. Cf. Chap. II, pp. 8, 9, 10; also supra p. 16.

38. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., pp. 115-16.

39. Ibid., p. 75, ll. 1-2.

40. Ibid., p. 14, ll. 10-14.

41. Ibid., p. 158, ll. 18-19.

42. Ibid., p. 97, ll. 9-12.

43. Ibid., p. 288, ll. 8-10.

44. Ibid., p. 50, l. 767.

45. Ibid., p. 29, l. 312.

46. Ibid., p. 19, l. 18.

47. Ibid., p. 102, l. 20.

48. Ibid., p. 290, l. 13.

49. Ibid., p. 254, l. 27.

50. Ibid., p. 24, l. 153.

51. Ibid., p. 172, l. 41.

52. Ibid., p. 118, l. 19.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUN, A SYMBOL OF RELIGION

True it is that the poet may give glory to God even when he does not sing directly of religion. Such singing, however, did not satisfy Francis Thompson. At times he even regretted having written poems of this kind. In "Retrospect" he tells us:

> Alas, and I have sung
> Much song of matters vain,
> And a heaven-sweetened tongue
> Turned to unprofiting strain
> Of vacant things....[1]

Even the use of created things as symbols of God and of religious truths seemed to him at certain times to be worthless. As has been noted in a previous chapter, "He came, even to the point of silence in certain moods, to feel the futility of all writings save such as were explicitly a confession of faith...."[2] It was at such a time that he wrote:

> What profit if the sun
> Put forth his radiant thews,
> And on his circuit run,
> Even after my device, to this and to that use;
> And the true Orient, Christ,
> Make not His cloud of thee?
> I have sung vanity,
> And nothing well devised.[3]

He makes his own the cry of holy men from time immemorial: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, except to love God and to serve Him alone."[4] What will knowledge of the solar system

avail, if one fails to do God's will and follow the orbit He has marked out for the soul?

> And thou have lore of all,
> But to thine own Sun's call
> Thy path disorbed hath never wit to tame;
> It profits not withal
> And my rede is but lame.[5]

He is comforted to think that sometimes he has burst into paeans of direct praise of God, and he hopes to make amends in the future. The poem "Retrospect" ends with a beautiful act of faith and trust:

> I trust in God most sweet.
> Meantime the silent lip,
> Meantime the climbing feet.[6]

At such times Francis Thompson is like the saints who feel that they have failed to do anything worthwhile in life, though ordinary men would mark the saints' great achievements, their heroic virtue, and their miracles. So the ordinary religious person, if he understands such poems as the "Orient Ode" and "The Ode to the Setting Sun," finds in them magnificent tributes to God and to Christ and a new appreciation of the Divine Beauty reflected in the material world. Although Thompson failed to become a priest in the strict sense of the word, he did become a poet-priest ordained to a "high Phoebean priesthood," and one preaching Christ's religion to all the world. True to that vocation he sacrificed human love and whatever else might stand in the way. He accepted as his Calvary the sorrows, privations, and temptations of life in

the London streets before his rescue, and the shattered health that was his to the end. He found in nature a liturgy symbolic of the Church's liturgy, and in those liturgies he gloried.

I. THE "ORIENT ODE"

Thompson acknowledges, as has been noted,[7] his debt to the Holy Saturday liturgy for the inspiration of the "Orient Ode." The great central ideas of that liturgy he made his own. These ceremonies make darkness and night stand for the death of Christ and for sin, while fire and light are types of Christ, of His resurrection, and of sinlessness. Of the blessing of the fire Cabrol says: "Fire or light plays an indispensable part in the life of man. The Liturgy makes use of it as a symbol of Christ, whose teaching enlightens the minds of the faithful and whose grace enkindles their hearts."[8]

The "Orient Ode" opens with one of the most sublime passages in all Thompson's poetry. It is a comparison of the rising of the sun, of its procession through the heavens, and of its setting to Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Day is the priest who in the sanctuary of the East, draws the host(the sun) out of its Orient tabernacle and lifts it in benediction of the world. Then, before the violet-cassocked acolyte(twilight) comes to unvest the priest(day), the sun sets in solemn exposition within its brilliantly-shining monstrance(the West). And the opening lines of the Latin hymn which is sung at

Benediction seem to follow naturally.

> Lo, in the sanctuaried East,
> Day, a dedicated priest
> In all his robes pontifical exprest,
> Lifteth slowly, lifteth sweetly,
> From out its Orient tabernacle drawn,
> Yon orbed sacrament confest
> Which sprinkles benediction through the dawn;
> And when the grave procession's ceased,
> The earth with due illustrious rite
> Blessed,--ere the frail fingers featly
> Of twilight, violet-cassocked acolyte,
> His sacerdotal stoles unvest--
> Sets, for high close of the mysterious feast,
> The sun in august exposition meetly
> Within the flaming monstrance of the West.
>
> O salutaris hostia,
> Quae coeli pandis ostium![9]

The sun, a symbol of God, upon Whom none may look and live, has come attacking darkness, sin. Before it dances the earth like David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant. As the Blessed Virgin Mary, the greater daughter of Eve, conceived at God's "Ave," pronounced by the Angel Gabriel, so the greater daughter of the moon(earth) will conceive at the sun's "Ave." The gazes and flatteries of the sun's eyes effect in the maiden(earth) charms that are not there before the hour when the sun's rays, its "plumes, shiver against the conscious gates of morn!"[10] Although the earth, like Mary, is of herself nothing and owes all to the love of the sun, she brings forth the beauties of nature, "sanctities of flower" and "holy odours," as Mary brought forth Christ.

The heavens likewise feel the attraction of the sun and at the same time fear it. The sun is a lion roaring upon the

heels of its satellites, which flee from it and yet are held by its radiant leash. In the same way human beings are attracted to God by His goodness, power, and beauty, but when they sin, they are terrorized by the thought of His wrath. The sun, like God, joins woman to man, life to death.

So far the sun has been made a symbol of the Godhead. Now it represents God the Redeemer. Christ is "the incarnated Light Whose Sire is aboriginal."[11] Like the God-Man the sun is not subject to death or to the recurrence of day and night. Like Him it is the

> Giver of Love, and Beauty, and Desire,
> The terror, and the loveliness, and purging,
> The deathfulness and lifefulness of fire![12]

As in the Savior because of His two-fold nature of God and of Man was fulfilled Samson's riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong came forth sweetness,"[13] so is this riddle fulfilled in the sun, which consumes and yet gives life and sweetness. All things mortal are destined to die, but the sun is an assurance that even death must yield to love and life, for it apparently dies in its setting only to be born anew in its rising in some other part of the world. Christ, the sun, is the inspirer of poets, teaching them to clothe spiritual truths in "sweet disguise" of human speech. It is through the moon(Mary), however, that the sun(Christ) teaches the poet to "translate into mortal wire....the heavenly harping harmony."[14]

Only through Mary does the earth live, for she is the mediatrix of all graces through whom the sun, Christ, confers His benefits. Christ is

> Light out of Light!
> Resplendent and prevailing Word
> Of the Unheard![15]

Thompson feels no surprise that in the ages of paganism men came to worship the sun, for it is an apt type of the true God. In his own time, when faith has grown cold in men's hearts, he considers his veneration of the sun "a bright sciential idolatry." The sun is an angel of the apocalypse with its "visible thunders" and fiery trumpet revealing the glory of God. If one but attends to the sun, what need has he of an angel to persuade him that God exists?

> Or who a God-persuading angel needs,
> That only heeds
> The burning rhetoric of thy deeds?[16]

That the poet may sing even half of these glories in such a way as to arouse worship in the hearer, he begs the sun, Christ, to cleanse and inspire his lips with fire even as the lips of the prophet Isaias were cleansed with a burning coal.

Many are the benefits wrought by the sunshine. It plants lightning in the grape's veins, rounds it to the sun's own form, ripens the crops, heals the sick, and is responsible for health, though it receives little gratitude from the healthy man. As Christ gave His blood that man might live, so the sun gives its own blood that the Maenad, earth, may revel.

As Christ is the life of all that live by grace, so the sun is the life of all those that have physical life. It dwells in our bodies as Christ dwells in the tabernacle. Like Him the sun is master of time, putting a bit into time's jaws, and measuring off time's paces. Christ is the Spouse of the Church; the sun is the husband of the universe, which mourns for him when he is away at night. In the morning the heavens commune with the sun "to renew their innocence," even as the devout Catholics go to Christ in Holy Communion to receive increase of grace and fresh cleansing from the lesser sins. Night, during which the heavens weep for the sun, symbolizes man's prayers, his search for God in the darkness of soul, and his weary watching for Him after man has sinned. When the sun is absent, the heavens and the earth together dumbly implore its coming, as the soul and the body beseech Christ to come to them. "The Spirit and the Bride say: 'Come!' "[17] To the long-awaited manifestation of the sun(its epiphany) the poet (its least Magian) hastens from the East of song, as the Wise Men from the East hurried to Christ's Epiphany. The sun is daily born and sacrificed, a victim for the life of all living things, as Christ is daily "born" and sacrificed in the Mass for the salvation of all men. Then the poet would perforce make clear to anyone who might still fail to see, that his song is addressed to the sun only as a symbol of Christ, to Whom he owes his inspiration.

Lo, of thy Magians I the least
Haste with my gold, my incenses, and myrrhs,
To thy desired epiphany, from the spiced
Regions and odorous of Song's traded East.
Thou, for the life of all that live
The victim daily born and sacrificed;
To whom the pinion of this longing verse
Beats but with fire which first thyself did give,
To thee, O Sun--or is't perchance to Christ?[18]

Consequently, if men say that the poet finds in nature holy rites and ceremonies similar to those which he has witnessed at the altars of the Catholic Church, they are right. What else could the poet do but heed the message of all nature, when he has gone about the whole earth and learned the secret of the sun and the chant of the stars?

'By this, O Singer, know we if thou see.
When men shall say to thee: Lo! Christ is here,
When men shall say to thee: Lo! Christ is there,
Believe them: yea, and this--then art thou seer,
When all thy crying clear
Is but: Lo here! lo there!--ah me, lo everywhere!"[19]

Thus in the "Orient Ode" we see the sun in its various aspects symbolizes different attributes of God and different actions and relations of Christ. God, the creator and conserver of the universe, is almighty, eternal, omnipresent, indispensable to man, a God of all-surpassing brightness. He is the source of all beauty and love, the center of the circle of man's activities, but He is also the enemy of evil and a terror to unrepentant sinners. All this the sun symbolizes in this poem. God's relations with His chosen people in the Old Testament are suggested by references to the Ark of the Covenant, to the judge Gideon, and to the prophet Isaias. God the Holy Ghost,

in the New Testament the spouse of the Virgin Mary, is also symbolized by the sun. Again, the sun represents the divine glory imaged in the Incarnate Word. It symbolizes Christ, true God and true Man, in His Epiphany, on the cross of Calvary, as judge of the living and the dead, as the Spouse of the Church, and as the silent Presence hidden under the appearances of bread and wine at Mass, at Communion, and at Benediction. The doctrine that Christ gives grace through Mary is also bodied forth in this ode as well as previously in "Sister Songs."

The "Orient Ode" might be summed up in the words of the book of "Wisdom":

> But all men are vain, in whom there is not a knowledge of God; and who by these good things that are seen, could not acknowledge him that is, neither ~~by attending to the~~ by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman. But have imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon, to be the gods that rule the world. With whose beauty, if they, being delighted, took them to be gods; let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they; for the first author of beauty made all things. Or if they admired their power and their effects, let them understand by them, that he that made them is mightier than they. For by the greatness of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby.[20]

Or it might be summed up more simply yet in the well-known words of the Psalm: "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the works of his hands."[21] Another passage from this Psalm is used as one gradual of the Mass for Ember Saturday in Advent, and is so close to Thompson's conception that it may have influenced his thought:

"He(God) hath set his tabernacle in the sun, and he as a bride-groom coming out of his bride-chamber. His going out is from the end of heaven, and his circuit even to the end thereof."[22]

II. THE ODE TO THE SETTING SUN

As the "Orient Ode" makes the sun a symbol of the God-head and of Christ, so does "The Ode to the Setting Sun," but it places greater emphasis on the sun as a type of Christ, stressing sunset as a memorial of His death, and sunrise as a symbol of His resurrection. In the prelude, as the sun, a bubble of red fire, goes down over the hill, "wailful music" comes down the breeze to fill the poet's soul with sadness. The scene is much like that described in the verses "To the Sinking Sun" except that the long, slanting rays of the sun kindle to blazing light a wooden cross planted in a field near the poet. This scene, however, raises a much deeper question in the poet's mind than did the other. He notices that the sun is setting to the soft strains of music as in days when it was worshipped as divine. Those days are past, and yet he feels for the sun a veneration, "for worship....too incredulous, for doubt....too-believing-passionate."[23] As will be revealed in the course of the poem, it is a veneration for the sun as a symbol of Christ. Seeing the sun's beam, its radiant finger, fixed on the cross, he asks whether the cross is the answer to the sun's secret. He calls upon the sun to heed his song and

its message, which it has not heard in "Northern day," the ages of paganism. This message of Christianity had been too daring for the adventurous spirit of military Rome, too mysterious for the keen intellect of philosophical Greece.

The Ode proper enunciates in the first few lines the theme of the poem:

> The fairest things in life are Death and Birth,
> And of these two the fairer thing is Death.[24]

Eventually, the poet will prove this theme conclusively by the death of Christ, but now he is content to show the beauty of death, actual or symbolic, in the natural order. Only when the star falls does it leave a brilliant trail of light; only the breaking of the wave enables it to reach the zenith of its power; only the passing shower which gives way to sunshine, has a rainbow hanging from it as a maniple from the arm of a priest. But the setting of the sun is a still more glorious proof, set forth in one of Thompson's magnificent passages:

> Is it not so, O thou down-stricken Day,
> That draw'st thy splendors round thee in thy fall?
> High was thine Eastern pomp inaugural;
> But thou dost set in statelier pageantry,
> Lauded with tumults of a firmament:
> Thy visible music blasts make deaf the sky,
> Thy cymbals clang to fire the Occident,
> Thou dost thy dying so triumphally:
> I <u>see</u> the crimson blaring of thy shawms!
> Why do those lucent palms
> Strew thy feet's failing thicklier than their might,
> Who dost but hood thy glorious eyes with night,
> And vex the heels of all the yesterdays?[25]

It is well to keep this stanza in mind and to compare it with the last stanza in the Ode, where the setting of the sun is

explicitly stated to be a memorial of Christ's death on the cross. For our Savior is the king who draws His splendors round Him in His fall. They are spiritual splendors visible only to the eye of faith, which sees, despite the horrible suffering surrounding Him, Christ the King clad in the royal purple of His blood and raised aloft on the throne of His cross, whence He draws all men to Himself.

But all the loud praise with which the lackeying earth attends the sun's setting, is faithless, for it will remain to greet the moon. The sun in the long ages of its history has seen other days in which worshippers were more faithful. It bore the name Hyperion, radiant in its immortal youth, before there was a Dionysus to bleed its grapes, or an Artemis to fill the woods with the blasts of the hunting horn. Yes, the sun was there to see the Titans storm the heights of Olympus in their attempt to overthrow the gods. And when the shock of their mighty clash threatened to shake the stars out of their places, it was the sun with its great sword and shield that put them all to flight.

Even before the days of mythology and paganism the sun had known glories. At the creation of the universe it was the sun that did,

> ....bursting from the great void's husk,
> Leap like a lion on the throat of the dusk.[26]

The angels acknowledged the sun as their brother, while the sun drew close its young bride, the Morn, and looked upon the

laughter of baby earth, which had just shaken off its swaddling bands.

To the sun, a "twi-form deity, nurse at once and sire," the earth owes everything--morning, evening, its jewels, its births, its huge pre-diluvian forests, and its animals,

> The lion maned in tawny majesty,
> The tiger velvet-barred,
> The stealthy-stepping pard,
> And the lithe panther's flexuous symmetry.[27]

From the sun come things for use and things of beauty. The hard facts of science are made to glow with the rapture of poetry as Thompson describes the formation of coal, "swart son of the swarthy mine."

> Thou gavest him his light
> Though sepultured in night
> Beneath the dead bones of a perished world.[28]

Connolly conjectures that the sun may here be a symbol of Christ bringing the light of redemption to a world buried in the night of sin.

In general, however, the sun in this part of the poem symbolizes the Godhead. God is the creator, orderer, and conserver of the universe--eternal, omnipotent, the source of life, power, and beauty. The part of the sun and hence of God in making beautiful such things as "the splendid rose, saturate with purple glows,"[29] the grape, the daffodil, the tulip, and the lily, is very strikingly portrayed.

> Thou sway'st thy sceptred beam
> O'er all delight and dream,
> Beauty is beautiful but in thy glance:

And like a jocund maid
In garland-flowers arrayed,
Before thy ark Earth keeps her sacred dance.[30]

But the sun has fallen in a red glare of sky from the ancient throne on which it was worshipped as a god, and there is no one to mourn its passing. No dirge comes from mortals who tread upon the sun's gifts as vintagers tread the winepress, nor from the sea, nor from the wind. In vain one listens for the lament of the Nymphs, Naiads, Oreads, and other demi-goddesses of pagan times. In retrospect they seem to us, as Thompson writes in "Paganism New and Old,"[31] beautiful gods, who made the earth "a living and a radiant thing," but their beauty is all outward show. This apparent beauty has vanished and left the earth a corpse in our arms as Eurydice was left in the arms of Orpheus. So it is with all that is good and fair in this life.

Whatso looks lovelily
Is but the rainbow on life's weeping rain.
Why have we longings of immortal pain,
And all we long for mortal?[32]

As he asks this question the poet looks out upon the sunset again. It is almost over, and the entire sky is a dull grey, except for a single gleaming fissure of light. Against that blaze the hill "stands black as life against eternity." Suddenly the poet's difficulty is solved as he reflects on the word 'eternity.'

Against eternity?
A rifting light in me
Burns through the leaden broodings of the mind:

O blessed Sun, thy state
Uprisen or derogate
Dafts me no more with doubt; I seek and find.[33]

The present life has meaning only when viewed in the light of eternity. The sun's message is at last clear. It is a symbol of Christ, true God and true Man, Lord of life and death. The sun's setting represents His death on the cross; its rising, His resurrection. Again, the setting of the sun in one part of the world and its rising in another part are types of Christ's ascension, when the light of His presence set on earth to rise in Heaven.

If with exultant tread
Thou foot the Eastern sea,
Or like a golden bee
Sting the West to angry red,
Thou dost image, thou dost follow
That King-Maker of Creation,
Who, ere Hellas hailed Apollo,
Gave thee, angel-god, thy station;
Thou art of Him a type memorial.
Like Him thou hang'st in dreadful pomp of blood
Upon thy Western rood;
And His stained brow did vail like thine to night,
Yet lift once more Its light,
And, risen, again departed from our ball,
But when it set on earth arose in Heaven.[34]

So is it with all things of earth. The fall is greater than the rise. Death is greater than birth, for we die only to be born again to a greater and a better life.

And so of all which form inheriteth
The fall doth pass the rise in worth;
For birth hath in itself the germ of death,
But death hath in itself the germ of birth.
....Till skies be fugitives,
Till Time, the hidden root of change, updries,
Are Birth and Death inseparable on earth;
For they are twain yet one, and Death is Birth.[35]

In the after-strain the poet sums up the meaning of the cross as typified by the setting of the sun. He feels "that other sun of Song" setting in his own bleakening soul. This is his first sustained attempt at a long poem and the inspiration is now vanishing. He must bear his cross, the night of silence, before the sun of inspiration returns. So it is with all fair things in this life. There is always some sorrow, some cross, connected with them. Although the cross will be a glory in Heaven to him who has born it well, here it is a "dread symbol" yielding only suffering. No matter how much we groan under the load, we must bear it and bear it alone. No other can carry it in our stead, as Simon of Cyrene helped Christ to carry His cross. Accordingly the poet calls on our Lady for consolation.

> Therefore, O tender Lady, Queen Mary,
> Thou gentleness that dost enmoss and drape
> The Cross's rigorous austerity,
> Wipe thou the blood from wounds that needs must gape.
>
> 'Lo, though suns rise and set, but crosses stay,
> I leave thee ever,' saith she, 'light of cheer.'
> 'Tis so: yon sky still thinks upon the Day,
> And showers aerial blossoms on his bier.[36]

The poet is satisfied and even gives thanks for his sorrows, sonce he realizes that the endurance of suffering in the proper spirit will result in joy, and that his very pain is a presage of an eternity in which his longings for perfect happiness will be satisfied. When that time comes, his soul will be received as a sister by the moon, Mary, and receive the kisses of the stars, the angels and saints.

Oh, this Medusa-pleasure with her stings!
  This essence of all suffering which is joy!
I am not thankless for the spell it brings,
  Though tears must be told down for the charmed toy.

No; while soul, sky, and music bleed together,
  Let me give thanks even for those griefs in me,
The restless windward stirrings of whose feather
  Proves them the brood of immortality.

My soul is quitted of death-neighbouring swoon,
  Who shall not slake her immitigable scars
Until she hear 'My sister!' from the moon,
  And take the kindred kisses of the stars.[37]

It is interesting to compare the messages of "The Ode to the Setting Sun" and of the "Orient Ode." The former might be summed up in the words "Crux spes unica"--the cross is our only hope. It is a new and a beautiful presentation of the answer of Christianity to the age-old problem of suffering and evil in the world. Only by acceptance of Christ's doctrine that suffering in this life leads to happiness in the next can the riddle be solved. Since the poem was written at the Premonstratensian monastery at Storrington shortly after Thompson's rescue from the streets, it is easy to see why he was so occupied with the question of sorrow. During those days on the streets of London he had experienced the depths of physical, mental, and spiritual suffering. In the meantime he had renounced opium. Now he was fighting to regain a modicum of physical strength and he was none too sure that the spring of inspiration would break in his soul after the winter of preparation.

The "Orient Ode" was written during Eastertide several years later(probably 1893).[38] By that time he had written much

of his greatest poetry including "The Hound of Heaven." He had found the sympathetic friendship of the Meynells to be enduring. He had made a new friend of a kindred spirit, Coventry Patmore. Consequently the mood of the "Orient Ode" is one of exultation in keeping with the spirit of the liturgical season in which it was written. While the message of "The Ode to the Setting Sun" remains eternally true, the poet prefers to see in sunset and sunrise not a vast and beautiful memorial of Christ's bloody death on the cross and of His resurrection, but the unbloody renewal of His death in the Sacrifice of the Mass. Christ has died once and can die no more. Now His glorified Body is present to us in Mass, in Communion, and in Benediction. So now the universe is a vast cathedral in which these ceremonies are performed. And the message of the "Orient Ode" is one of joy, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will."[39]

III. OTHER POEMS

In many of his other poems Thompson uses the sun as a symbol of religion. It represents God, the creator and orderer of the universe, Who is indispensable to man and to all creatures, but Whose presence and power are unseen and unfelt;[40] God, Who is unknown to pagans and can be known by men only analogically through creatures;[41] Whose brightness is too great for the human eye to endure.[42] Again, the light of the sun

represents God's glory tempered to the weakness of man's vision in the humanity of Jesus Christ.[43] It is this glory that clothes the Blessed Virgin in Heaven and that alone lights the heavenly courts like clouds of golden fire coming from a silver thurible in place of incense-fumes.

There was never moon,
Save the white sufficing woman:
Light most heavenly-human--
Like the unseen form of sound,
Sensed invisibly in tune,--
With a sun-derived stole
Did inaureole
All her lovely body round;
Lovelily her lucid body with that light was interstrewn.

The sun which lit that garden wholly,
Low and vibrant visible,
Tempered glory woke;
And it seemed solely
Like a silver thurible
Solemnly swung, slowly,
Fuming clouds of golden fire, for a cloud of incense-smoke.[44]

Further on in this poem, "The Mistress of Vision," the light of the sun symbolizes the knowledge and grace of God, hidden from those nations that dwell in the underground of paganism and live in fear of the hard sayings of the gospel. These sayings only seem hard to people living in the darkness of paganism just as the light of the sun would at first seem unbearable to people who had always lived underground.

East, ah, east of Himalay,
Dwell the nations underground;
Hiding from the shock of Day,
For the sun's uprising sound:
Dare not issue from the ground
At the tumults of the Day,
So fearfully the sun doth sound
Clanging up beyond Cathay;

For the great earthquaking sunrise rolling up beyond Cathay.[45]

In "From the Night of Forebeing" the earth's subjection to the sun is a type of man's dependence on the providence of God. Despite that dependence on God or rather because of it, man is free. For there is no true freedom without law. Were it not for God's law and His guiding hand, man would fall into ruin even as the earth, "unshackled from the bright Phoebean awe,"[46] would disintegrate. The awakening of the earth at the coming of the sun's light in spring symbolizes creation, when light sprang into being at God's fiat:

> ....Thou wak'st, O Earth,
> And work'st from change to change and birth to birth
> Creation old as hope, and new as sight;
> For meed of toil not vain,
> Hearing once more the primal fiat toll:
> 'Let there be light!'
> And there is light!
> Light flagrant, manifest,
> Light to the zenith, light from pole to pole,
> Light from the East that waxeth to the West,
> And with its puissant goings-forth
> Encroaches on the South and on the North;
> And with its great approaches does prevail
> Upon the sullen fastness of the height,
> And summoning its levied power
> Crescent and confident through the crescent hour,
> Goes down with laughter on the subject vale:
> Light flagrant, manifest,
> Light to the sentient closeness of the breast,
> Light to the secret chambers of the brain.[47]

"Carmen Genesis" compares God's creation of the world with the poet's creation of verse. The <u>fiat</u> of the uncreated Light, God, brought created light into existence.

> Sing how the uncreated Light
> Moved first upon the deep and night,
> And, at Its <u>fiat lux</u>,

Created light unfurled, to be
God's pinions--stirred perpetually
In flux and in reflux.[48]

That created light God divided into sun, moon, and stars. Man, the little world which God next created, was dark and awaited the coming of God. The Eternal Light became incarnate that man might not live in darkness.

His locks He spread upon the breeze,
His feet He lifted on the seas,
Into His worlds He came:
Man made confession: 'There is Light!'
And named, while Nature to its height
Quailed, the enormous Name.[49]

The poet fashions upon a small scale what God made upon a large scale. His intellect is a "luminous voice" bringing into being the light of poetry. An Elias and a John the Baptist, he prepares the way that God, the Light, may enter man's intellect.

Addressing Mrs. Meynell in "To a Poet Breaking Silence," Thompson likens God's grace which brings the soul to spiritual maturity, to the sun's rays which ripen the grapes.

As the vintages of earth
Taste of the sun that riped their birth,
We know what never-cadent Sun
Thy lamped clusters throbbed upon,
What plumed feet the winepress trod;
Thy wine is flavorous of God.[50]

In "Assumpta Maria" Mary is represented as the "Hostel of the Sun," the sun in turn representing Christ, Who in His resurrection escapes from the prison of the grave and returns to the womb of His mother. When God(the sun) takes Mary and her human nature(the Sea) as His spouse, He elevates human nature to the

divine nature(wine) in Christ, their Son. The poet's expression of this mystery is reminiscent of Christ's miracle at the marriage feast of Cana.

Where is laid the Lord arisen?
In the light we walk in gloom;
Though the Sun has burst his prison,
We know not his biding-room.
Tell us where the Lord sojourneth,
For we find an empty tomb.
'Whence He sprung, there he returneth,
Mystic Sun,--the Virgin's Womb.'
Hidden Sun, His beams so near us,
Cloud-empillared as He was
From of old, there He, Ischyros,
Waits our search, Athanatos.

Who is She, in candid vesture,
Rushing up from out the brine?
Treading with resilient gesture
Air, and with that Cup divine?
She in us and we in her are,
Beating Godward: all that pine,
Lo, a wonder and a terror--
The Sun hath blushed the Sea to wine![51]

Many other examples of the sun as a symbol of Christ might be given. The sun represents Christ as the spouse of the Church,[52] as the conqueror, coming in the clouds of heaven,[53] and as uniting the souls of martyrs to Himself in glory.[54]

Sometimes, however, the sun or its light, is a type of the soul,[55] of faith,[56] of love,[57] of grace(in the theological sense),[58] of Heaven,[59] of a priest in the confessional,[60] of a nun breaking cloister,[61] of a thurifer at Benediction,[62] and of a golden gong calling all Nature to Vespers. This last is all the more remarkable, because it is found amidst the reveling in nature which marks "A Corymbus for Autumn," and is so beautiful

that with it this chapter on the sun as a symbol of religion may well close. Addressing autumn he speaks of one of her moods:

> Or higher, holier, saintlier when, as now,
> All Nature sacerdotal seems, and thou,
> The calm hour strikes on yon golden gong,
> In tones of floating and mellow light
> A spreading summons to even-song:
> See how there
> The cowled Night
> Kneels on the Eastern sanctuary-stair.
> What is this feel of incense everywhere?
> Clings it round folds of the blanch-amiced clouds,
> Upwafted by the solemn thurifer,
> The mighty Spirit unknown,
> That swingeth the slow earth before the embannered Throne?
> Or is't the Season under all these shrouds
> Of light, and sense, and silence, makes her known
> A presence everywhere,
> An inarticulate prayer,
> A hand on the soothed tresses of the air?
> But there is one hour scant
> Of this Titanian, primal liturgy;
> As there is but one hour for me and thee,
> Autumn, for thee and thine hierophant,
> Of this grave-ending chant.
> Round the earth still and stark
> Heaven's death-lights kindle, yellow spark by spark,
> Beneath the dreadful catafalque of the dark.[63]

And before the candles were lighted round his own catafalque, Thompson had uttered in his sun symbolism a beautiful confession of faith in the Catholic Church, a confession that matches article for article the Apostles' Creed, and goes further to include many other doctrines and devotions dear to Her children.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. Rev. Terence L. Connolly, S. J., Ph. D., editor, Poems of Francis Thompson (New York: The Century Co.,1932), p. 198, ll. 1-5.

2. Everard Meynell, The Life of Francis Thompson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 202.

3. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., pp. 198-99, ll. 9-16.

4. The Holy Bible, translated from the Latin Vulgate (Philadelphia: John E. Potter and Company, no date given), Ecclesiastes, I, 2.

5. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 199, ll. 23-27.

6. Loc. cit., ll. 43-45.

7. Cf. supra Ch. II, p. 17.

8. Dom F. Cabrol, O. S. B., The Roman Missal (Tours: A. Mame and Sons, Imprimatur 1921), pp. 391-92.

9. Rev. Terence L. Connolly, op. cit., pp. 163-64, ll. 1-17.

10. Loc. cit., l. 41.

11. Ibid., p. 165, ll. 78-79.

12. Loc. cit., ll. 83-85.

13. The Holy Bible, Judges, XIV, 4-9, quoted by Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 455, note to ll. 86-91.

14. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 166, ll. 114-16.

15. Ibid., p. 167, ll. 127-29.

16. Ibid., p. 167, ll. 142-44.

17. Ibid., p. 168, ll. 186.

18. Loc. cit., ll. 187-95.

19. Ibid., p. 169, ll. 206-11.

20. The Holy Bible, Wisdom, XIII, 1-5.

21. Ibid., Psalm XVIII, 2.

22. Dom F. Cabrol, op. cit., p. 19, Gradual taken from Psalm XVIII, 6-7.

23. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 82, ll. 21-22.

24. Ibid., p. 83, ll. 3-4.

25. Loc. cit., ll. 11-23.

26. Ibid., p. 84, ll. 62-63.

27. Ibid., p. 86, ll. 107-10.

28. Loc. cit., ll. 122-24.

29. Loc. cit., ll. 128-29.

30. Ibid., p. 87, ll. 149-54.

31. Francis Thompson, The Works of Francis Thompson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), III, pp. 38-52, especially 38-39.

32. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 88, ll. 192-92.

33. Loc. cit., ll. 204-09.

34. Ibid., pp. 88-89, ll. 210-24.

35. Loc. cit., ll. 226-29; ll. 235-38.

36. Ibid., p. 90, ll. 17-24.

37. Ibid., p. 90, ll. 29-40.

38. Everard Meynell, op. cit., p. 192.

39. Dom F. Cabrol, op. cit., p. 444.

40. Rev. T. L. Connolly, op. cit., p. 182, l. 58; p. 174, ll. 106-20; and note on p. 462; pp. 169-70, ll. 21-47.

41. Ibid., p. 153, ll. 73-80; p. 48., ll. 695-701; pp. 216-26 passim.

42. Ibid., p. 92, l. 34; p. 185, ll. 153-54.

43. Ibid., p. 182, ll. 57-58.

44. Ibid., p. 152, ll. 28-43.

45. Ibid.,p. 153, ll. 72-80.

46. Ibid., p. 174, l. 111.

47. Ibid., pp. 174-75, ll. 135-54.

48. Ibid., p. 189, ll. 1-6.

49. Ibid., p. 190, ll. 49-54.

50. Ibid., p. 60, ll. 62-67.

51. Ibid., p. 188, ll. 65-84.

52. Ibid., p. 180, ll. 337-42; and notes on pp. 467-68.

53. Ibid., p. 173, l. 82.

54. Ibid., p. 235, l. 64.

55. Ibid., p. 20, l. 47; p. 132, l. 9.

56. Ibid., p. 234, ll. 2-10.

57. Ibid., p. 196, l. 59.

58. Ibid., p. 43, l. 507.

59. Ibid., p. 48, l. 700.

60. Ibid., p. 192, l. 10.

61. Ibid., p. 221, l. 174.

62. Ibid., p. 135, ll. 49-50; as a censer cf. p. 49, ll. 740-42.

63. Ibid., p. 99, ll.79-104.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The foregoing pages have discussed the place which the sun holds in human life and the special place it had in the life of Francis Thompson. Factors in his life which influenced his use of sun symbolism and imagery have been considered, his delicate health and sensitiveness, his Catholic faith, his seminary training with consequent knowledge of the liturgy and Holy Scripture, and his medical studies which gave him scientific knowledge of the sun's phenomena. To Scripture and the liturgy Thompson was indebted for the inspiration of his sun symbolism and sometimes for method of treatment. His debt to other writers cannot be shown with the same conclusiveness, but it is very probable.

In the chapter on the sun as a symbol and an image of natural objects an attempt has been made to interpret what the sun meant to Thompson in "Sister Songs," "To the Sinking Sun," "The Song of the Hours," "Daphne," and other poems. His frequent descriptions of sunrise and sunset in highly imaginative language have come up for consideration as well as his insistence on the sun as the source of life and of poetic inspiration.

It has been pointed out, moreover, that natural objects

in the world about us can be fully explained only by an appeal to God and the supernatural. Thompson's explanation, set forth in his use of the sun as a symbol of religion, has been given in interpretations of the "Orient Ode," of "The Ode to the Setting Sun," and of passages from other poems such as "The Mistress of Vision," "From the Night of Forebeing," "Carmen Genesis," and "Assumpta Maria." In these poems the sun symbolizes the Godhead and Its attributes, and Christ, true God and true Man, in the events of His earthly life and His relations with the Church. At times the sun also represents various aspects of the Catholic religion such as ministers at the altar, articles of worship, and different virtues.

The mere number of references to the sun in Thompson's poetry is impressive. A complete list of these references is to be found in an appendix. When it is remembered that the whole body of Francis Thompson's poetry is comparatively small, the importance of the sun symbolism and imagery is more fully realized. Thompson did not write many long poems, and two of his longest are devoted entirely to sun symbolism, the "Orient Ode," and "The Ode to the Setting Sun." Moreover, a whole body of symbolism is bound up with this symbolism of the sun, for Thompson's use of the sun as a symbol of God enables him to make the rest of the solar system symbolize God's creatures. It is no exaggeration to say that the sun as a symbol occupies the central and most important position in Thompson's poetical

vision. To understand it is to hold the key which unlocks all his poetry.

> Stand at the door and knock;
> For it unlocked
> Shall all locked things unlock,
> And win but here, thou shalt to all things win,
> And thou no more be mocked.[1]

As Agnes de la Gorce remarks, one never tires of the sun as a symbol of Christ.[2] The more one ponders this symbolism the deeper he penetrates into the truths it represents. Even the message of "The Hound of Heaven," God's pursuit of the soul, is implicit in the sun symbolism, for it is true of the sun as of God that we can only flee to its absence, not to anything that takes its place. We do not imply that the use of the sun as a symbol of God and of Christ is original with Thompson. We have already seen that the Holy Scriptures themselves use this symbolism. When the apostles desired to describe Christ in the glory of His transfiguration, they could do no better than to say: "His face did shine as the sun...."[3] The same symbolism is found in the Fathers. Saints of the middle ages continued the usage. It is likely that in all ages devout worshipers of God have enriched or at least perpetuated this symbolism of the sun. But nowhere has the writer found it as beautifully set forth, as completely developed, as richly syggestive as in the poetry of Francis Thompson.

The passages which have been discussed in this thesis, illustrate the range of Thompson's imagination. He draws his

material from the sanctuary, the laboratory, the battlefield, the theology and science lecture rooms, the vineyard, the sea, the garden, the desert, the jungle, and the sheep-fold. Birth and death, joy and suffering, the beautiful and the useful, in short, every phase of life is grist for the mill of his imagination. In him we find the wedding of poetry and religion for which he pleads in his essay on Shelley.[4]

To the union of his poetry and his religion Thompson owed much of his greatness. And as a loyal son of the Catholic Church who has made her dogmas and devotions doubly dear to many of her children, he has helped her fulfill that part of her mission to which James Russell Lowell pays glowing tribute:

> Suppose that a man in pouring down a glass of claret could drink the South of France, that he could so disintegrate the wine by the force of imagination as to taste in it all the clustered beauty and bloom of the grape, all the dance and song and sunburnt jollity of the vintage. Or suppose that in eating bread he could transubstantiate it with the tender blade of spring, the gleam-flitted corn-ocean of summer, the royal autumn, with its golden beard, and the merry funerals of harvest. This is what the great poets do for us, we cannot tell how, with their fatally chosen words, crowding the happy veins of language again with all the life and meaning and music that had been dribbling away from them since Adam. And this is what the Roman Church does for religion, feeding the soul not with essential religious sentiments, not with a drop or two of the tincture of worship, but making us feel one by one all those original elements of which worship is composed; not bringing the end to us, but making us pass over and feel beneath our feet all the golden rounds of the ladder by which the climbing generations have reached that end; not handing us drily a dead and extinguished Q. E. D., but letting it rather declare itself by the glory with which it interfuses the incense-clouds of wonder and aspiration and beauty in which it is veiled. The secret of her power is typified in the mystery of the Real Presence. She is the only Church that has been

> loyal to the heart and soul of man, that has clung to her faith in the imagination, and that would not give over her symbols and images and sacred vessels to the perilous keeping of the iconoclast Understanding. She has never lost sight of the truth, that the product human nature is composed of the sum of flesh and spirit, and has accordingly regarded both this world and the next as the constituents of that other world we possess by faith.[5]

It is a magnificent tribute, but one that might be paid in all sincerity to the poetry of Francis Thompson.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Rev. Terence L. Connolly, S. J., Ph. D., editor, Poems of Francis Thompson (New York: The Century Co., 1932), p. 261, ll. 161-65.

2. Agnes de la Gorce, Francis Thompson, translated by H. F. Kynaston-Snell (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1933), p. 132.

3. The Holy Bible, translated from the Latin Vulgate (Philadelphia: John E. Potter and Company, no date given), St. Matthew, XVII, 2.

4. Francis Thompson, The Works of Francis Thompson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), III, pp. 1-4.

5. James Russell Lowell, "A Few Bits of Roman Mosaic," Fireside Travels, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, copyright 1864 and 1892), pp. 289-91.

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7. Loyola, St. Ignatius, The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. Translated from the original Spanish. 3rd ed., revised, no translator given. London: Burns and Oates, 1900.

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12. Vaughn, Herbert M., From Anne to Victoria. London: Methuen, 1931.

13. Weygandt, Cornelius A., Tuesdays at Ten. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

APPENDIX

REFERENCES TO THE SUN IN THOMPSON'S POETRY

(All references to pages are to be found in Poems of Francis Thompson, edited by Rev. Terence L. Connolly, S.J., Ph.D. New York: The Century Co., 1932)

The Poppy, p. 7, l. 6; p. 9, l. 66.

To My Godchild, p. 14, l. 2; ll. 10ff., especially l. 13; p. 16, l. 57.

Sister Songs, Proemium, p. 19, l. 4; l. 18; l. 21; p. 20, l. 47; the whole Proemium is full of sun imagery.
Part One, p. 21, l. 13; l. 22; p. 23, l. 86; p. 24, l. 153; p. 26, ll. 231-32; p. 27, l. 236; p. 29, l. 312; p. 30, ll. 353-54; l. 356; p. 27, l. 240; p. 28, ll. 286-87.
Part Two, p. 30, ll. 2-6; p. 31, ll. 14-18; l. 42; l. 46; p. 33, ll. 109-13; l. 123; p. 34, ll. 139-43; ll. 158-62; p. 35, l. 200; p. 36, l. 222; p. 39, ll. 334-36; l. 350; p. 40, l. 365; p. 41, l. 412; p. 43, l. 507; p. 44, l. 514; l. 517; p. 45, ll. 562-65; ll. 577-79; p. 46, ll. 611-15; p. 47, l. 632; p. 48, ll. 681-82; l. 697; l. 700; p. 49, ll. 731-35; ll. 740-45; p. 50, l. 767.
Inscription, p. 51, l. 19.

To a Poet Breaking Silence, p. 60, ll. 62-66.

"Manus Animam Pinxit," p. 61, l. 23.

Her Portrait, p. 69, l. 57; p. 71, l. 152.

Epilogue to the Poet's Sitter, p. 72, l. 11; p. 73, l. 32; l. 51.

After Her Going, p. 75, l. 19.

Beneath A Photograph, p. 75, ll. 1-4; p. 76, ll. 14-19.

The Hound of Heaven, p. 79, ll. 71-72; p. 80, l. 123.

The Ode to the Setting Sun, throughout, pp. 82-90.

To the Dead Cardinal, p. 91, ll. 25-26; p. 92, ll. 33-34.

A Corymbus for Autumn, p. 97, ll. 9-21; p. 98, l. 45; ll. 68-78; p. 100, ll. 139-43.

The Veteran of Heaven, p. 102, ll. 20.

A Sunset, from Hugo's 'Feuilles D'Automne,' throughout, pp. 104-105.

Heard on the Mountain, from Hugo's 'Feuilles D'Automne,' p. 107, ll. 53-54.

Buona Notte, p. 111, l. 12.

Daphne, p. 115, ll. 1-5 and throughout.

A Fallen Yew, p. 118, l. 19.

A Judgement in Heaven, p. 121, l. 9.

The Sere of the Leaf, p. 126, ll. 27-35; p. 127, ll. 47-48; ll. 58-59.

Orison-Tryst, p. 132, l. 9.

Song of the Hours, p. 133, l. 9; p. 134, ll. 15-16; ll. 33-40; ll. 49-50; p. 135, ll. 71-72; l. 79; p. 136, ll. 111-12; p. 137, ll. 143-46; ll. 149-51; ll. 155-56.

Past Thinking of Solomon, p. 140, l. 4; p. 141, ll. 11-14.

Cheated Elsie, p. 141, l. 2; p. 142, l. 10, l. 20.

Mistress of Vision, p. 152, ll. 37-43; p. 153, ll. 72-80; p. 154, ll. 100-03.

Contemplation, p. 158, l. 18; l. 43.

New Year's Chimes, p. 169, l. 23; p. 170, l. 26; l. 35; l. 47.

Orient Ode, throughout, pp. 163-69.

From the Night of Forebeing, p. 171, second text, l. 1; ll. 18-21; p. 172, l. 41; p. 173, ll. 82-86; l. 91; p. 174, ll. 106-23 passim; pp. 174-75, ll. 140-54 passim; p. 177, ll. 232-33; p. 178, ll. 280-83; p. 179, ll. 302; l. 331; p. 180, l. 340.

Any Saint, p. 182, l. 58; p. 185, l. 153.

Assumpta Maria, p. 186, l. 2; p. 187, l. 35; p. 188, l. 62; l. 67; ll. 72-73; l. 84; p. 189, l. 103.

Carmen Genesis, p. 189, ll. 1-6; l. 7; l. 19; p. 190, l. 25; l. 30; l. 37; l. 46; l. 52.

Ad Castitatem, p. 192, l. 10; p. 193, l. 44.

The After Woman, p. 196, l. 59.

Grace of the Way, p. 196, l. 1.

Retrospect, p. 198, ll. 9-14; p. 199, l. 24.

An Anthem of Earth, Proemion, p. 216, l. 11, p. 217, l. 40; Anthem, p. 218, ll. 37,38; p. 220, ll. 128-32; p. 221, ll. 146-48; l. 152; l. 174; p. 224, l. 281; p. 225, ll. 299-300; p. 226, l. 347.

To the English Martyrs, p. 234, ll. 9-10; p. 235, l. 64; p. 237, l.132.

Peace, p. 250, ll. 1-4.

Cecil Rhodes, p. 254, l. 27; l. 42.

Of Nature: Laud and Plaint, p. 258, l. 79; p. 259, ll. 83-93.

To the Sinking Sun, throughout, pp. 273-74.

July Fugitive, p. 277, l. 66.

Field-Flower, p. 278, l. 20.

The Cloud's Swan-Song, p. 281, l. 32; p. 282, l. 65.

To Monica: After Nine Years, p. 285, l. 39.

Nocturn, p. 288, ll. 8-10.

Marriage in Two Moods, p. 290, ll. 13-14.

All Flesh, p. 291, ll. 11-12.

The thesis "The Sun in the Poetry of Francis Thompson," written by Walter Buchanan Dimond,S.J. has been accepted by the Graduate School of Loyola University with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Rev.W.I. Bundschuh,S.J. July 10,1936

Rev.Marshall Lochbiler,S.J. July 15, 1936

Rev. Allan P.Farrell,S.J.